

Benchmarks

These are the articles published in the Summer 1996 issue.

These pages are meant for use as an archive for the University of North Texas publication *Benchmarks*. Many of these files are old and contain information and links to sites that no longer function. This is because, over time, many sites shutdown or change addresses thus voiding all links to them. Please keep in mind that all links may not work as they should.

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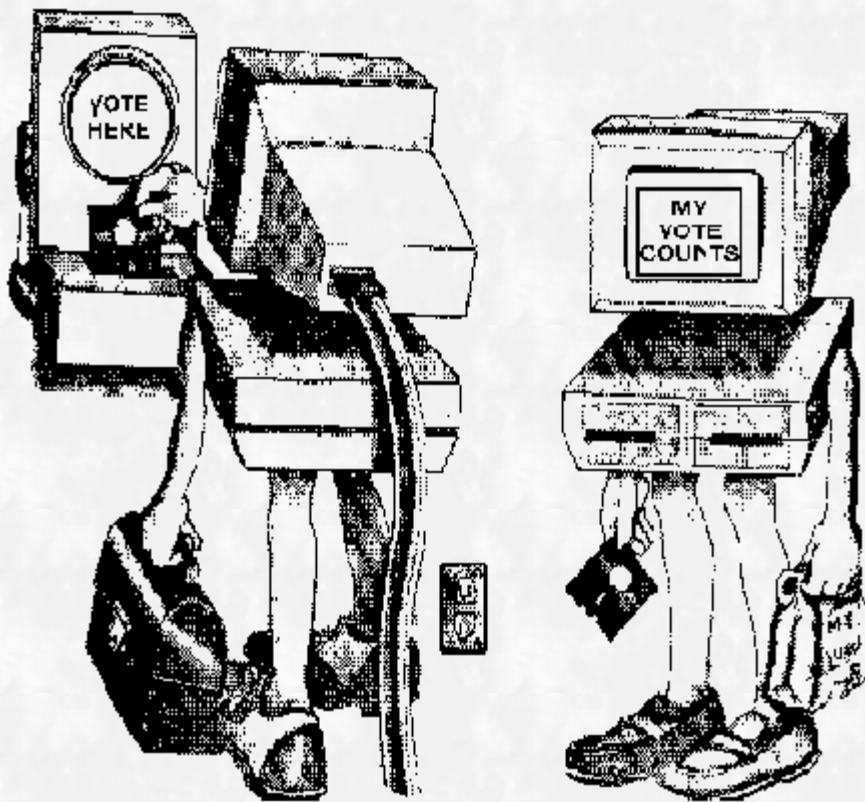
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Electronic Democracy

By [Claudia Lynch](#),
Benchmarks Editor
(lynch@unt.edu)

Electronic Democracy is an expression of the information age. According to Lewis A. Friedland, "the concept of 'electronic democracy' connotes a radically new form of democratic practice modified by new information technologies."¹ Through the technology of the Internet, people have greater access to government agencies and information. They also have the ability to disseminate that information rapidly to large numbers of people - thus promoting grass-roots organizations and activism.



In his senior thesis, *The Network Nation Revisited*, David Belson notes that "Grass-roots political movements, thanks to the electronic interconnection of millions of people, are now more powerful than ever before. Supporters of candidates, as well as the candidates themselves, can now share information in a matter of minutes."²

Whereas it took years for information and ideas to circulate by hand and to arrange the face-to-face meetings that drafted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, computer networks can greatly speed up the process of people-to-people exchanges of information, ideas, and plans of actions. Of course, not only small or 'splinter' groups recognize this potential. By the 1980's in the United States, many presidential campaign organizations were using CMC [Computer Mediated Communication] to organize their nationwide efforts. By the 1992 campaign, the Democratic candidate was uploading position papers directly into Compuserve, and Ross Perot was promising an 'electronic town hall' that would directly involve citizens in debates and preference votes, should he be elected. (Newsweek, June 22, 1992, quoted in Belson, 1994)

Obviously this has the potential for both positive and negative results.³ People voting on a whim, from their living rooms, might not be the best way to run a country. On the other hand, informed voters are the glue that holds our representative democracy together. As James Madison wrote, "A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prelude to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."⁴

Getting your Feet Wet

The Kennedy School Online (KSGOPIN - <http://ksgwww.harvard.edu/~ksgpress/opinhome.htm>) is a great place to begin your electronic journey into politics. This Web page is divided into twelve

major areas: Elections; Parties, Candidates; Federal Government; State/Local Government; Think Tanks; Advocacy; International; Academia; More Politics; Politics of the Net; Reporters' Resources; Good Directories. Each area, in turn, is broken up into sub-areas, with links to just about any sort of political information that is available on the World Wide Web. If you followed all the links listed, it would probably take you the better part of a day.

Another good jumping off point is **The National Political index** (<http://www.politicalindex.com/>). The National Political Index is sponsored by Americans Who Work for a Living (AWWL), a non-profit, non-partisan, 501(c)(3) organization. This site has links to just about any kind of political information you can think of - federal, state, local and even "un-elected Beltway VIP's."

Open Government in Progress

For a look at electronic democracy at work, try the **California 1996 Primary Election Server** (<http://ca96.election.digital.com/>). It is a good example of what can be done to keep voters informed and involved.

An entire electronic "community" dedicated to the concept of electronic democracy can be found at **Democracy Place** (<http://democracyplace.org/>). According to their welcome message, "This is your town on the Internet for civic journalism and citizen participation in the public policy debate. Here you'll find the information you need to understand the issues of this campaign year - stories, interviews, polls, and much more. You'll find tools you can use to make your voice heard. You'll find a community of other citizens who want to get involved. You'll find outstanding examples of civic journalism projects in Democracy Forum, where ordinary people, not politicians, set the agenda."

Another site that is involved with electronic democracy at the community level is the **Civic Practices Network** (<http://www.cpn.org/cpn.html>). According to their Web site, "Civic Practices Network (CPN) is a collaborative and nonpartisan project bringing together a diverse array of organizations and perspectives within the new citizenship movement. We share a commitment to bring practical methods for public problem solving into every community and institutional setting in America."

Communicate with Congress

There are lists of Congressional E-mail addresses all over the Internet. The two listed below are Web-based forms and allow you to find out who your representatives are, in case you don't remember.

- **Deliverance** (<http://www.seas.gwu.edu/seas/ictsp/deliverance/intro.html>) gives you a simple way to communicate with Congress and prompts you to think about what you're asking for also.
- **Email Democracy** (<http://syninfo.com/emaildem/emaildem.html>) exhorts "Why waste paper, time, and money? 81 Senators and 176 Representatives have email addresses as of 2/18/96. Communicate electronically with your Representatives in government."

If those aren't enough for you, links to similar Web sites can be found at <http://www.seas.gwu.edu/seas/ictsp/deliverance/other-sites.html>

Voters Guides/Information

If you're looking for specific information to better inform yourself about candidates for an upcoming election, the sites listed below should be of help to you.

- **Capweb** (<http://policy.net/capweb/congress.html>) - An Unofficial Guide to the U.S. Congress.

- **Civic Practices Network** (<http://www.cpn.org/>) - "A learning collaborative for civic renewal."
- **Federal Election Commission Home Page** (<http://www.fec.gov/>) - Information about election regulations and more.
- **The Jefferson Project** (<http://www.voxpop.org/jefferson/>) - "The comprehensive guide to on-line politics."
- **League of Women Voters** (<http://www.lwv.org/~lwvus/>) - "The League of Women Voters is a multi-issue organization whose mission is to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government and to influence public policy through education and advocacy."
- **Netizen** (<http://www.netizen.com/netizen/>) - *Wired Magazine's* online election project.
- **NetVote '96** (<http://www.internetuniv.com/netvote96/>) - A voters' guide for young people from Internet University.
- **Policy Street** (<http://www.policy.com/>) - An aggregation of think tanks and advocacy groups. Lots of good information and lots of links.
- **Power the Vote** (<http://www.lhj-lwv.com/>) - Brought to you by the League of Women Voters and the Ladies Home Journal.
- **Project Vote Smart** (<http://www.vote-smart.org/>) - a non-partisan clearing house for political information.
- **Rock the Vote** (<http://www.rockthevote.org/>) - MTV's voting guide.

Presidential Campaign Pages

Quite a few people want to be president this year. Below are the Web pages of the candidates who will appear on most ballots.

- **Bill Clinton** (<http://www.cg96.org/>) - Campaigning for four more years of elected office.
- **Bob Dole** (<http://www.dole96.com/>) - Presumptive Republican Party nominee.
- **Reform Party** (<http://www.reformparty.org/>) - Will they nominate Ross Perot or Richard Lamm?
- **Harry Browne** (<http://www.HarryBrowne96.org/>) - Libertarian Party presidential candidate.
- **Ralph Nader** (<http://www.rahul.net/cameron/nader/>) - Green Party candidate.
- **Mary Cal Hollis** (<http://sunsite.unc.edu/spc/prez/index.html>) - Socialist Party candidate.

If you're interested in keeping up with the latest opinion polls on these candidates (or at least the first 3), the **Gallup Organization** is providing that service at <http://www.gallup.com/news/index.html>.

Register to vote on-line

Well almost - you can download the National Mail Voter Registration form, available from the Federal Election Commission (<http://www.fec.gov/votregis/vr.htm>).⁵ If you really want to register on-line, check out MCI's "first comprehensive online voter registration site on the World Wide Web" (<http://netvote96.mci.com/register.html>). The same caveats for the Federal Election Commission form exist for on-line registration. If your permanent residence is in North Dakota or Wyoming, you can't register on-line.

Global Election Information

If you still haven't gotten enough of politics on the net and want more, you might be interested in the Elections and Electoral Systems Web page. Information about elections and electoral systems worldwide can be found there at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/po/election.htm>. Happy browsing!

1 "Electronic Democracy and the New Citizenship" (http://www.cpn.org/sections/new_citizenship/e-

[dem&new_citizenship1.html](#))

2 <http://www.stevens-tech.edu/~dbelson/thesis/thesis.html>

3 See "[Cyberhoax: Lie spreads on Internet](#)," for a negative example of electronic democracy.

4 As quoted in "The Future of News" by Howard Rheingold
(<http://www.rtndf.org/rtndf/new/reingold.htm>)

5 If your permanent residence is in the following states, you could have a problem.

- At the present time, Illinois, and Mississippi will accept this application as a registration to vote for federal offices only (President, U.S. Senator, & U.S. Representative). This means, for instance, that you would not be able to vote in an election for the Governor of your State.
- New Hampshire town and city clerks will accept this application only as a request for their own mail-in absentee voter registration form
- North Dakota does not have voter registration
- Vermont town and city clerks will accept this application only as a request for their State mail-in voter registration form
- Wyoming cannot accept this form under State law.

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Government Documents on Campus

By Bobby Griffith, UNT Government Documents Department, Willis Library
(griffith@library.unt.edu)

The Government Documents Department at the UNT Libraries provides free access to thousands of government publications on a wide variety of topics. We have a Web page that describes the Department and provides links to many electronic sources of government information on every level from local to international. The Documents Department Web page is accessible on the Internet at <http://www.library.unt.edu/info/willis/govdocs/deposit3.html>. You can also get to the Documents page from the UNT Libraries homepage at <http://www.library.unt.edu>. Select "Library and Departmental Information," then select "Government Documents Department" (under "Willis Library").

The Documents Department has two links on its web page that are of special interest in this election year:

1. "A Guide to the 1996 U.S. Election Campaigns" is an annotated list of selected internet sites of interest to voters. The guide includes sites related specifically to the 1996 elections as well as sites that provide political analyses and profiles of elected officials, sites related to various aspects of political activism, and sites that assist with voter registration.

The guide is accessible at <http://www.library.unt.edu/info/willis/govdocs/elect96.html>. You can also get to it from the Documents Department web page (see URL above) by selecting "Hot Topics" (under "Ready Reference"), then "1996 Elections."

2. "Finding Information About Elected Officials" explains how to research your elected officials using both internet sources and other sources available in the UNT Libraries. It also includes instructions for writing a letter to your legislator and a directory of legislators for citizens of Denton County, which gives names, phone numbers, mailing addresses (including E-mail addresses when available), and proper salutations.

"Finding Information About Elected Officials" is accessible at <http://www.library.unt.edu/info/willis/govdocs/elecfile.html>. You can also get to it from the Documents Department web page (see URL above) by selecting "Politics/Elected Officials" (under "Finding Government Information at UNT.")

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Gateway to Government Information

By Cathy Hartman, UNT Government Documents Department, Willis Library
(chartman@library.unt.edu)

The University of North Texas Libraries Federal Depository Library is pleased to announce the Gateway to Government Information. The Government Printing Office makes its *GPO Access* services available through depository libraries. By connecting to *GPO Access* via the UNT Gateway, publications of the United States Government may be easily searched. Publications available for searching include the *Congressional Record*, *Federal Register*, *Congressional Bills*, *U.S. Code*, *Economic Report of the President*, *Congressional Directory*, *Budget of the United States Government*, and many other Federal databases.

The UNT Gateway is currently the only World Wide Web gateway in Texas. Users may access the gateway by pointing their Web browser to: <http://www.library.unt.edu/gpo>. Databases may be searched as frequently as needed and at no charge. For local user support or comments, contact Cathy Hartman, Documents Librarian: Electronic Resources Coordinator, at (817) 565-2870 or gpo@library.unt.edu.

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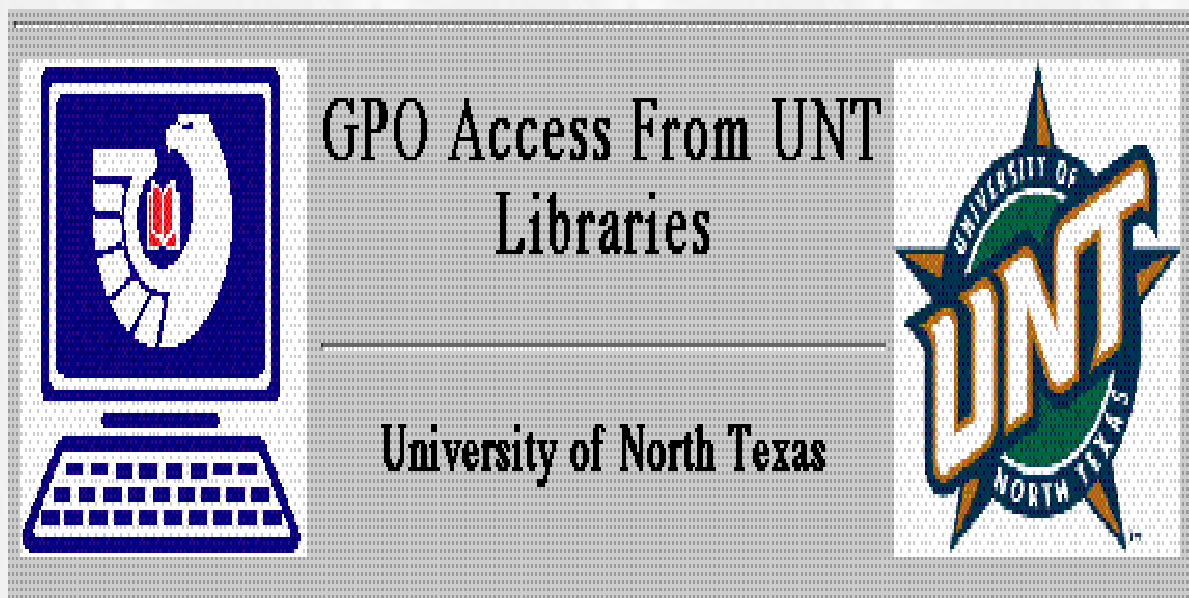
Announcing

University of North Texas Libraries'

Gateway

To Government Information

Point you Web browser to: <http://www.library.unt.edu/gpo>



The Federal Depository Library at the University of North Texas Libraries is pleased to announce **World Wide Web Gateway** services to **GPO ACCESS**. Sources available for searching include:

- Congressional Record
- United States Code
- Congressional Bills
- Congressional Documents
- Economic Report of the President
- U.S Government Manual
- House & Senate Calendars
- Federal Register
- Public Laws
- History of Bills
- Congressional Reports
- Economic Indicators
- Congressional Directory
- Jefferson's Manual
- Budget of the United States Government and more

Your comments on the organization and presentation of the Gateway are solicited. Send comments to gpo@library.unt.edu



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Congressional Internet Caucus

The Congressional Internet Caucus is a bipartisan group that was formed this spring to educate members of Congress about how the Internet works and bring more members of Congress on-line. They are promoting the Internet as a way to facilitate better communication between members of Congress and their constituents.

Statement of Principles 1

The stated goals of the Caucus are as follows:

- **Promote** growth and advancement of the Internet;
- **Provide** a bicameral, bipartisan forum for Internet concerns to be raised;
- **Promote** the education of Members of Congress and their staffs about the Internet;
-
- **Advance** the United States' world leadership in the digital world.
- **Maximize** the openness of and participation in government by the people.

Founders

The group was co-founded by Representatives Rick White(R-WA), Rick Boucher (D-VA), Senators Larry Pressler (R-SD) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

1 See http://www.house.gov/white/internet_caucus/netcauc.html

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An open letter from the Congressional Internet Caucus to the Internet Community

From the Congressional Internet Caucus to the Internet Community (
http://www.house.gov/white/internet_caucus/letter.html)

On March 28, 1996, the founding members of the Congressional Internet Caucus posted this letter to the following newsgroups: comp.org.eff.talk, comp.org.cpsr.talk, alt.politics.datahighway, alt.censorship, alt.privacy, talk.politics.crypto, and misc.news.internet.announce.

To the Internet Community at-large,

Finally, there is something that both Democrats and Republicans can agree on -- it is time to get Congress on-line for the 21st Century.

Over the past few years, the Internet has changed the way we communicate, do business and educate our children. Millions of people log-on to the Internet each day to send and receive information. And this new medium has created thousands of new jobs in our nation's economy.

As more and more people go on-line and as the Internet becomes a greater part of our daily lives, new questions arise about how to deal with this new medium. Members of Congress are having to make policy decisions on Internet issues that will impact our future.

What role, if any, will the federal government have in developing the Internet? How will Congress respond to Internet-related issues? From encryption to indecency, copyright protection to universal service, Congress will need to make prudent public policy decisions about a medium that presents such enormous opportunities for all Americans.

Congress must not make these decisions without the full understanding of and familiarity with the Internet.

The Internet will also transform Congress and the government. From communicating with constituents to making government documents available on-line, we need to move into the Information Age NOW.

Members of Congress need to use the Internet.

To solve some of these problems, we are forming the Internet Caucus: a bipartisan, bicameral group of members with diverse viewpoints. What we share is a mutual concern for promoting the Internet.

We will not just talk the talk. Caucus members will walk the walk into cyberspace by signing a pledge to 1) educate themselves about the Internet, 2) get on-line, 3) and educate other members about the Internet.

The caucus will also serve as a clearinghouse of information for the public and other offices about Internet related issues. With the assistance of an advisory committee comprised of public interest groups, industry, and respected experts on the Internet, members will discuss and debate policy options.

We look forward to getting your input on the many issues before Congress. See you on-line!

Sincerely,

Congressman Rick White, Senator Patrick Leahy, Congressman Rick Boucher, Senator Larry Pressler, Speaker Newt Gingrich, Congressman Jack Fields, Congressman Edward Markey, Congressman Mike Oxley, Congressman Christopher Cox, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, Congressman Robert Goodlatte, Congressman Thomas Campbell, Congressman Robert Walker, Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn, Congressman Vern Ehlers, Senator Slade Gorton, Senator Conrad Burns, Senator Ron Wyden, Congressman Sam Farr, Congressman Bill Luther

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The Congressional On-Line Pledge

On-Line for the 21st Century

From http://www.house.gov/white/internet_caucus/pledge.html

As members of the Internet Caucus, we pledge to ...

Open up Congress so that our constituents can have more information from and more access to their elected representatives.

Network with the Internet community to receive their input on the issues affecting the Internet that come before Congress.

Learn more about how the Internet works and use it.

Increase member's usage of the Internet by working to get more members of Congress on-line by the end of this year.

N In Ninety days, get on-line by maintaining a World Wide Web site or public e-mail for my congressional office.

Educate members of Congress about the Internet and to raise the level of knowledge on upcoming Internet issues that Congress will deal with in the Information Age.

As members of the Internet Caucus, we believe that it is time for Congress to move itself into the Information Age. While we have made some progress in making government more open, we will not meet the reasonable expectations of our constituents until each office and committee is ON-LINE and accessible to the public.

This year it is our goal to better educate Congress on the role of the Internet in our daily lives and to get other members to join us in our pledge to get **ON-LINE** for the 21st Century.

Signed,

Congressman Rick White, Senator Patrick Leahy, Congressman Rick Boucher, Senator Larry Pressler, Speaker Newt Gingrich, Congressman Jack Fields, Congressman Edward Markey, Congressman Mike Oxley, Congressman Christopher Cox, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, Congressman Robert Goodlatte, Congressman Thomas Campbell, Congressman Robert Walker, Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn, Congressman Vern Ehlers, Senator Slade Gorton, Senator Conrad Burns, Senator Ron Wyden, Congressman Sam Farr, Congressman Bill Luther, Senator John Ashcroft, Congressman Joe Moakley, Senator Edward Kennedy, Congressman Martin Hoke, Senator Bob Bennett, Senator Bill Frist, Congressman Jon Christensen, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Senator Larry Craig, Senator Connie Mack, Senator Charles Robb, Representative Sherwood Boehlert, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Senator Harry Reid, Senator John Kerry, Senator Patty Murray, Congressman Dan Frisa, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Congresswoman Nita Lowey, Congresswoman Jane Harman, Senator Hank Brown, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, Congressman Barney Frank, Congressman Stephen Horn, Congressman Charles Canady, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee, Congressman Paul Gillmor, Congressman José Serrano, Congresswoman Deborah

Pryce, Congressman Bart Stupak, Congressman Billy Tauzin, Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Congressman Cliff Stearns, Congressman Robert Matsui, Congressman John Kasich, Congressman Jim Ramstad

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Cyberhoax: Lie Spreads on Internet

By Curtis Morgan and Elisabeth Donovan

*Reprinted with permission from the Miami Herald Online Web site, Heraldlink,
<http://www.herald.com> This article was published Friday, August 2, 1996 in the Miami Herald.*

In cyberspace, they call it trolling. Post something outrageous online and see who bites. Someone went trolling last week, placing a bogus message about the downing of TWA Flight 800, using the hot-button words "Bill Clinton" and a credible source, "The Miami Herald."

The result: fodder for anti-government conspiracy buffs, a rumor that spread like electronic wildfire, a flood of inquiries to The Herald - and some questions about the power of the Internet.

"There is a lot of fear going on around that this kind of thing could have serious ramifications," said Charles Green, a journalism professor at Florida International University.

On July 24, a short message appeared in the alt.conspiracy newsgroup, one of thousands of discussion forums on the Internet, about the TWA crash off Long Island that killed all 230 people aboard.

It read: "It was reported in The Miami Herald today that two of the passengers were former Arkansas state troopers that were on Bill Clinton's security detail. They were on their way to Paris to be interviewed by the LeMonde in Paris, as well as the News of the World in London."

Some ex-troopers who guarded Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas have alleged that they helped him meet women and book hotel rooms for illicit liaisons. Clinton has repeatedly denied the allegations.

But there were no troopers aboard the flight. The Herald never carried such a story. Nor did any other major media.

The posting sat three days before another user calling himself Rambo copied it to other Web sites whose addresses include telltale words like activism.militia, survivalism and impeach.clinton.

By Thursday, the message was on at least a dozen news groups frequented by anti-government users, and it drew immediate response. Most scoffed or emphasized that it was an unverified report, but some swallowed the bait. They viewed it as an extension of tragic events - which they consider suspicious - that include the suicide of presidential adviser Vincent Foster and the death of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown in a plane crash in Bosnia.

"Read the reports," one entry says, "so far over 100 people that worked for him in Ark. are dead."

Another rebuffs a doubter this way: "Why do you say conspiracy theory? I thought this was a mention of a fact seen in the Miami Herald. You can make your own conclusions."

On the airwaves

The hoax also reached both short wave and talk radio. The Herald received calls from Idaho, California, Virginia, Maryland and elsewhere from people seeking copies of the article.

Robert Wilson, who does radio commentary for Wake Up America, a Washington, D.C.-based

program that broadcasts on five stations covering 20 states, called The Herald to verify the story. He heard it on tape from another radio show, reported as fact. Wilson called the fabrication "poisonous information from a poisoned well."

The hoax does raise questions about the 'Net. No one can say how many bogus messages are sent out every day, but the TWA hoax underlines how easily the 'Net can be misused.

Hilbert Levitz, a computer-science professor at Florida State University and president of the city's free online system, says pranks have not created widespread problems but have been mostly simple annoyances.

"It doesn't seem to be as serious as it could be, but the potential is there," Levitz said.

Green, the FIU professor, likens the 'Net to a street corner. "Anyone can come along and say what they want."

Most people will take 'Net discussions with a grain of salt, but others simply believe what they read. That poses some dangers.

Hypothetical Case

"Take a company stock, for example," Green said. "Say someone posts that The Wall Street Journal has reported that the president of a major multinational corporation has absconded with the company funds."

There is already heated debate over the issue of privacy on the 'Net. Pranks like this will only add fuel to the fire. Green expects the Net will eventually have to find a way to deal with such problems. For now, though, no one can agree on how - or if - to police the 'Net.

The Herald traced the original posting to the Internet address of Gene Hilsheimer, who supervises a military flight simulator in Panama City. Hilsheimer denied creating it. "Well, gosh, it's amazing what goes out there and is picked up," said Hilsheimer, a former Homestead resident who moved to the Panhandle after he was displaced by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. But in electronic mail to The Herald, he played coy: "I am certain that the person or persons who posted this . . . had no idea how many difficulties they may have created for both of us. However, if it was a simple troll, then whoever it was must be amazed at the effect they have had. Probably well beyond their original expectations."

"Whoever they are, they should be ashamed of themselves and advised to pick a more fictitious source if they ever decide to go trolling in the future."

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The Network Connection

By [Dr. Philip Baczewski](#), Assistant Director, Academic Computing Services (baczewski@unt.edu)

*This column is a continuing feature of **Benchmarks** intended to present news and information on various aspects of wide area networks.*



When George Bush left the Whitehouse, there reportedly was only one rotary dial phone on the President's desk in the Oval office.

Times have quickly changed. The Whitehouse now runs on E-mail and regardless of what you think of the current political situation, you have to admire the amount of government information resources that have appeared on the Internet. Information is key to the effective operation of a participatory democracy, and the Internet has opened up a world of easily accessible information. State governments and smaller political units too have embraced Internet technology, so from city council minutes to state services, keeping up with your local government is now easier as well.

U.S. on Line

All three branches of the Federal Government are represented on the Internet. The Executive branch is most visibly represented by the Whitehouse home page at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>. This page offers information about the President and Vice President as well as a virtual tour of the Whitehouse itself. Another significant resource on this page is the Interactive Citizen's Handbook. It allows you to search the Whitehouse Web server, search all government web servers for a particular piece of information, access links to Cabinet offices or other government branches, or browse through various topical information ranging from education to housing.

The legislative branch is represented by two web sites: <http://www.house.gov/> is the web site for the House of Representatives and <http://www.senate.gov/> is the site for the Senate. Both sites have biographical information about the representatives as well as historical information and information about the legislative process. Another web site which supports legislative information is run out of the Library of Congress. The service is called "Thomas" after Thomas Jefferson, and includes a great deal of legislative information as well as on-line copies of the Congressional Record. You can access it at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. Don't overlook the main Library of Congress page as well (<http://www.loc.gov/>). It is a valuable link to all kinds of information.

The Judicial branch also has a web presence. You'll find their page at <http://www.uscourts.gov/>. You'll find information about the various courts, a description of how the courts operate, a directory of on-line judicial information, and many other items. Some judicial information is also available from non-government sources. You can find copies of the Supreme Court decisions from Cornell University at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/>. Emory University has created a Federal Courts finder page which allows you to find which district court has jurisdiction in your area (see <http://www.law.emory.edu/FEDCTS/>).

A large amount of Governmental agency information can be found via the FedWorld page at <http://www.fedworld.gov/>. This web site, maintained by the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), provides access to various government reports, tax information, and a listing of all Federal Government jobs. Some non-government web sites also provide good government contact information. The site, http://www.netrus.net/users/peace/govt_em.htm, lists E-mail addresses for the President, Vice President, and all members of Congress and each address is a mailto: link which makes it easy to send a quick message. A more general information page about contacting the U.S.

Congress is found at <http://ast1.spa.umn.edu/juan/congress.html> and yet another approach is offered by a page named "The Zipper" at <http://www.voxpop.org/zipper/>: it will return the name and address of your Congressperson based on the Zipcode you provide.

State Stuff

State Governments are also on the Web and you can access any of the state web pages available from another of the Library of Congress pages: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/global/state/stategov.html>. This page also includes information about state government in general and a link to maps of the individual states.

Texas' main web page is found at <http://www.texas.gov/> and includes various types of information, from tourism to State agencies. A couple of other interesting Texas web sites are the Comptroller's "Window on State Government" (<http://www.window.texas.gov/>), the Attorney General's page (<http://www.oag.state.tx.us/>), and of course, the Lottery results (<http://www.window.state.tx.us/txgovinf/txlottery.htm>). The Texas page (www.texas.gov) also has links to county and municipal information.

Community Info.

To find out if your community is on the World Wide Web, a good place to start looking is at the USA *CityLink* Project page (<http://www.usacitylink.com/>). *CityLink* is reported to have listings for more cities and states than any other site on the web.

Conclusion

From your city to Washington, chances are your government's on the Web. Now go, participate!

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List of the Month

Each month we will highlight one BITNET, Internet, or USENET Special Interest Group (SIG) mailing list. This month's list...

Electronic Democracy Discussion List

el-democracy@www.ispo.cec.be

The purpose of this discussion list is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on the very important topic of electronic democracy.

They would like to hear information on electronic democracy projects or initiatives planned or underway in this area, positive or even negative experiences gained as a result of these projects, views on issues that should be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of such applications or any relevant information.

This discussion forum is open to anybody who wishes to voice their opinions.

Owner: the European Commission's Information Society Project Office (ISPO) [Androulla Kaminara aka@ispo.cec.be]

To subscribe via E-mail: you can send mail to Majordomo@www.ispo.cec.be with the following command in the body of your email message: subscribe el-democracy

To subscribe from the WWW, go to <http://www.ispo.cec.be/ispo/elecmodl.html>

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New Political Web Sites!

Every Day!

By Claudia Lynch, *Benchmarks* Editor (lynch@unt.edu)

If you just can't get enough of the Web *or* politics, point your browser to **Political Site of the Day!** (<http://www.IntPub.com/siteoftheday.html>). This site promises "a daily link to political sites which are entertaining, informative and/or relevant to the current discourse. The sites are selected by merit in the above areas, not by ideology."

If *that's* not enough for you, **AllPolitics** (<http://AllPolitics.com/analysis/web>) has a "Web Site of the Day" also. AllPolitics promises to help you "find your way through the babble by recommending the pages worth your time and steering you away from the junk."

Happy browsing!

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Fun With Politics

By [Claudia Lynch](#), *Benchmarks* Editor (lynch@unt.edu)

What could be more political than the First Lady's hair? At **Hillary's Hair** Web site (<http://Hillaryshair.com/>) you can immerse yourself in the arcana of Hillary Clinton's hair. See "Hillary's Hair - The Video," watch "Mighty Morphin' Hillary," draw your own Hillary's Hair, get the Hillary Screensaver, and even listen to the First Lady's brief reaction to the site.

Fun with a purpose

If you want to have a little more serious fun, you might like to try the game **Reinventing America II**. This game, found at <http://pathfinder.com/reinventing/>, lets you run the country your way.

The game began in July, 1996 and will continue through January, 1997. You can join at any time. Players will be reviewing everything the federal government does and a pretend Congress will act as the players direct. At the end of the game, in January, the players decisions will be compiled into the Reinventing America Federal Reform Act. This document will be presented to the real Congress and to the nation at a press conference in Washington, D.C.

Stump the politician

Hard-Q of the Week (<http://www.wp.com/HARD-Q/>) allows you to query the 1996 presidential candidates. According to the information at the Web site, "You can ask the 1996 presidential candidates the questions that Larry King and the New York Times won't. Since our site serves as a major town hall - perhaps 50 million persons will be represented by the questioners' organizations - we expect candidates to answer the Hard-Qs on their home pages." If no answers are given, Hard-Q promises to take them to task.

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Cobwebs

By Doug Bateman, CWIS Coordinator (dbateman@unt.edu)

This column covers features and resources available through the University's Campus Wide Information System (CWIS). It was formerly named "News from the CWIS/Gopher Hole." UNT's Home Page on the World Wide Web can be found at <http://www.unt.edu>.

State of the Art?

Are you keeping up with the latest technology and innovations related to the World Wide Web? If you are like me, you are most likely feeling overwhelmed with all the new buzzwords and advertising hype. I almost dread to open the weekly trade journals to which I subscribe because I know full well that I am going to be inundated with at least a dozen new products that promise to make my Web pages so exciting that no one will be able to resist their allure, not to mention the latest news in the ever-escalating war between Microsoft and Netscape and their respective allies. It's enough to make one yearn for the days of CP/M!

Those feelings notwithstanding, here is my feeble attempt at helping you sort out the latest and greatest (or not so greatest as the case may be) tools, non-standard standards, and techno-marvels that are currently available to make your Web authoring projects easier (???) than ever to accomplish.

Executable Content a.k.a. Interactivity

If you are to believe the marketing types for the hot companies building Web-related software, it is no longer good enough to have meaningful content in your Web pages. Nosirree! You've got to make your pages interact with the user, with animation everywhere. To be considered successful and effective, your Web pages need to **Do Something!** no matter where the user clicks. It just goes to show that you still can't believe everything you read or that pops up when you click on it.

However, beneath the surface of glimmer, gloss, and glitz of this marketing hype lie some truly innovative and functional concepts. At least they will be functional once they have matured somewhat. And unless you have been stranded on a desert isle, you can probably guess that the item leading the pack celebrating interactivity is ...

Java

Ordinarily I am very suspicious of anything that commands so much attention from the media, but this is one concept that I can't help but love. If you can bring yourself to ignore all the promises, criticisms, reports of security snafus, and other related journalistic hyperbole, you will find upon close examination that Java is a rather elegant, delightful, and intriguing programming language.

I hate to burst the bubble of all of you Webaholics out there who think that all there is to Java is to download the latest variation of the Scrolling LED applet and plug it into your HTML document (yawn!), but Java was and is a marvelous computer programming language. To me, it far surpasses C++ in its capabilities and potential, and it brings to mind warm, fond memories of my Smalltalk programming days with its strong object orientation.

I predict that, in spite of all the attention Java is getting in the press, it will be a resounding success. Unfortunately, UNT is not in a position yet to support Java applications delivered over its TCP/IP networks. The last full release of Netscape Navigator is version 2.02, and Java support is not available for all computers which can run Navigator 2.02. **For more information, take a look at the release notes available at <http://home.netscape.com/eng/mozilla/2.0/relnotes/>.**

Some other important Java-related sites:

- <http://java.sun.com/> The Internet home of JavaSoft
- <http://www.gamelan.com/> EarthWeb's Gamelan, the Java Directory
- <http://www.jars.com/> The Java Applet Rating Service

ActiveX

OK. Time for a confession. I am one of those persons who loves to hate Microsoft or is it hates to love Microsoft? Actually, both are true. Darn them if they don't make some outstanding products, which makes it extremely difficult for me to justify why I am not numbered as one of their fans. If they just didn't come across as so much of a corporate bully so frequently, I probably wouldn't dislike them so much. Oh well, enough of this and on to the reason that I appeared to digress.

Because of my feelings about Microsoft in general, I can't say that I have explored their competing technology to Java, ActiveX, very much. I have been quite content to live with Java and hope that ActiveX goes away even though it might be a much better solution (I never claimed that I was rational!) I do know that ActiveX has its roots in Microsoft's Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) technology, and furthers their advocacy of their Component Object Model (COM) versus the *other* proposed standard, the Common Object Request Broker Architecture (CORBA). It's probably best that I say little more and simply direct you to some Web sites where you can learn more about this:

- <http://www.microsoft.com/> Naturally.
- <http://www.activextra.com/> The Ultimate Web Site for the ActiveX Community

JavaScript

This is an *embeddable* scripting language that is based somewhat loosely upon the Java programming language. By *embeddable* I mean that it is entirely contained within an HTML document, unlike Java where applets and applications reside on a server and are downloaded to the browser before running. While a great deal simpler than Java, it is still a concept that will primarily prove itself useful to persons who enjoy programming. Unfortunately, it still has some distance to go before it can be considered *stable*. If you examine the release notes for the variety of versions of Netscape Navigator which support JavaScript, you'll discover a long list of bugs, problems, and assorted annoyances, even in the latest beta version of Netscape Navigator.

Frankly, I will be using readily available alternatives that are proven to be robust, do not rely upon

client-side support (i.e. limited to a Web browser that supports JavaScript), and are much more stable. If/when JavaScript has matured enough to be truly useful, then I will explore it further.

In addition to the release notes page for Netscape Navigator and EarthWeb's Gamelan site mentioned earlier, here are some other noteworthy JavaScript Web sites:

- <http://home.netscape.com/eng/mozilla/2.0/handbook/javascript/>
- <http://home.netscape.com/eng/mozilla/3.0/handbook/javascript/>
- <http://www.netscape.com/>.

Microsoft's Internet Explorer is now in version 3.0b2 and matches Navigator almost feature for feature. Unfortunately, this release is only available for Windows 95 and Windows NT 4.0 - am I the only one who finds this curious? Wander over to Microsoft's Web site, <http://www.microsoft.com>, for more information.

Also, the Computing Center Support Services (HelpDesk) has a site, <http://www-lan.unt.edu/HELPDESK/>, that contains a lot of information relevant to both of these products, particularly in their use with a PPP connection available at UNT.

HTML Editors

Microsoft (drat!) continues to improve their Internet Assistant add-on to Word for Windows. It is an excellent tool to use if you really want to avoid ever looking at HTML tags something I do not advocate. However, nothing beats churning out Web pages than doing so within the comfortable environment of a familiar word processor, even if you do need to clean it up afterwards with Notepad. You can retrieve it at their home site noted earlier.

The latest version of HoTMetaL Pro, 3.0, makes it even more my tool of choice when I want to be absolutely certain that I am writing correct HTML. It definitely gets in the way if you need to get something out in a hurry - in this case I don't think anything will ever beat vi - but I do not believe it can be beat for doing HTML the **right** way. In addition, this new version includes a much improved table editor, support for HTML 3.x and common extensions, the capability of importing both Microsoft Word and WordPerfect files, and provides support for Java applets, JavaScript, and ActiveX. Find out more about this at SoftQuad's home, <http://www.softquad.com/>.

New HTML and HTTP Specifications

Lest we forget about those things that provide the foundation for the World Wide Web, both HTML (HyperText Markup Language) and HTTP (HyperText Transport Protocol) have changed. Yes, even our favorite non-standard standards are sporting new version numbers.

Of the two, more extensive changes have taken place in HTML. It is now published as an Internet Draft Standard for HTML 3.2 no, I don't know what happened to 3.1. HTML 3.0 existed as a draft standard for the requisite six-month period, but since no one could agree on what it should specify in the end, it was allowed to expire. There was even talk at one point that there would no longer be a standard since manufacturers weren't paying much attention to the draft standards being published. In the end, representatives from the major commercial and non-profit entities interested in the Web sat down and reached an agreement (sort of) on 3.2. For details, take a look at the World Wide Web Consortium's pages at <http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/MarkUp/>.

Most people do not get involved with, nor do they have a need to know much about, HTTP. But, like all things involving the Internet, there actually exists a formal specification for how

Web browsers and Web servers are supposed to talk to one another. The most notable changes that have occurred in the move from version 1.0 to 1.1 are the capability for the connection between a browser and a server to remain *alive* for the duration of a session, and additional information that can be exchanged between the browser and the server. Most of this is of interest primarily to those of us heavily involved in computer programming related to the Web, but for all interested parties detailed information is available in another area of the WWW Consortium's site, namely <http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/Protocols/>.

Closing

Well, I don't know about you, but I certainly feel better. I think maybe I have succeeded in overloading you readers with information just like I experience most every day now. I hope that this has proven interesting and beneficial to many of you.

... and so it goes.

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Information Resources Council News

Minutes provided by Sue Ellen
Richey, Recording Secretary



IRC Regular Voting Members: *David*

Shrader, College of Music (Chair);

Douglas Allen, Student Association;

Walter Bowen, Academic

Administration; Bill Buntain, Communications Program Group; Cengiz Capan, College of Business;

Carolyn Cunningham, Student Affairs; Paul Dworak, College of Music; Brian Forsman, UNT

Health Science Center; Chuck Fuller, Fiscal Affairs; Don Grose, Libraries; Joneel Harris,

Administrative Program Group; David Hartman, School of Community Services; Jenny Jopling,

Instruction Program Group; Sam Magill, UNTHSC Director of Information Technology Services;

Sharon Marek, Graduate Student Council; Steve Miller, Human Resources; Dennis Mueller,

Research Program Group; Russ Pensyl, School of Visual Arts; Paul Schlieve, College of Education;

Kathleen Swigger, College of Arts and Sciences; John Todd, Faculty Senate; Virginia Wheeless,

*Chancellor; **IRC Ex-officio Nonvoting Members:** Jim Curry, Microcomputer Maintenance Shop;*

Richard Harris, Computing Center; Coy Hoggard, Computing Center; Maurice Leatherbury,

Computing Center.

May 21, 1996

Research Program Group

The Chair asked Dennis Mueller to present the Research Program Group's comments on the draft memo written to the Vice Presidents. Dennis stated that the committee wants to make clear their position that if a new Vice President is appointed for information technology, there should be no administrative costs incurred. The committee agrees with the intent of the memo, and feels strongly about the need for increased feedback from the administration on IRC recommendations.

The consensus of the IRC was that no additional administrative cost should be incurred as a result of the NCHEMS report. In addition, the IRC members agreed that there should be direct feedback from the administration on all IRC recommendations, and the memo to vice presidents should reflect these opinions. The recording secretary was instructed to revise the memo to the Vice Presidents to incorporate these comments and redistribute it to members for their approval.

Distance Learning Task Force

Dean Nora Bell was asked to give a report on the Distance Learning Task Force. As background, she stated that the President, in recognizing that distance learning is vital to maintaining UNT's competitive advantage, appointed a task force last fall and asked them to look at this issue and make some initial programmatic and technological recommendations with a goal of having a report to him by December 1, 1995.

The committee met with the TAGER representative to discuss issues UNT had with them. When the committee finished its work they made an initial recommendation for a tentative budget in the first

year of \$541,000-\$600,000 with a projected budget of annual, on-going expenditures of \$425,000-\$450,000. The committee recommended that there be a director of distance learning with an operating budget, which would include funds for several support staff at various levels.

Included in the budget recommendation was the cost of software and marketing expenses. The committee also recommended an increase in instructional development grants to encourage faculty to develop courseware for use in distance learning. Dr.. Bell explained that the committee believes that the best chance of getting into distance learning is to enhance existing course offerings. They believe that UNT should take advantage of what TAGER is now doing and should use pre-packaged courseware and encourage their use in core curriculum. In addition, the committee suggested the possibility of establishing another VTEL link with PDI or the downtown Dallas educational center.

The committee's initial recommendation was for the director to pull together all types of existing resources, with the immediate first step being the appointment of a director of distance education who would report to the Provost; accelerate UNT's linkage to the Texas A & M network; that a small group of selected faculty should be identified to begin course development.

Requirements that the committee set up were to have the director identify the distance learning educational facilities as UNT facilities not department resources which could be scheduled centrally; attempt to establish connections with North Texas Education Network and other networks in the area; begin to develop guidelines for UNT's contractual relationships with private and public-sector partners, as well as policies and guidelines for faculty evaluations, promotions and tenure incorporating instructional technology; establish rules on handling profit from development of courseware; and faculty remuneration if they teach for other institutions. The committee was concerned that there be a policy regarding intellectual property rights of any courseware developed, and that anything produced for students be of high quality.

The task force is now waiting to hear from the Provost about its next charge. Dr. Bell invited IRC members to send her any comments or suggestions and she would present them to the committee when they reconvene.

GroupWise Implementations

Bill Buntain reported that during the last month GroupWise has been implemented in several more units: Student Affairs, and Human Resources. School of Community Service is tentatively scheduled for mid-June. Pre-implementation meetings are scheduled for June 3-7 for bringing several administrative units in, such as the Police Department, Purchasing, and Business Services. Bill said that Arts & Sciences may lag over into the Fall, and the Library will be changed over between second summer session and fall semester.

Distributed Computing

Bill Buntain presented the Ad Hoc Committee on Distributed Computing Support's final report and explained that it doesn't replace the interim report but addresses additional issues such as campus-wide standards to facilitate network management and user support (which involves deployment and configuration of servers and desktop platforms), and coordination between centralized and distributed support areas.

The report suggests that the ad hoc committee report recommendations be turned over to a new distributed computing support management group and it recommends that the task be subdivided into work teams with the IRC reviewing the groups' work in a year. Paul Dworak said that there still needs to be a management model developed by the committee with the reporting structure clearly articulated by the current committee or by the new management group.

Bill explained that the committee's general thought was that the existing support staff could be moved into the new structure and that the management model would not change now but could perhaps be altered after a year when the whole project could be evaluated.

Discussion followed during which Paul Schlieve asked that the tables presented with the report either be revised to show correct numbers for the College of Education or be stricken from the final report prior to approval of the report by the IRC. Paul Dworak asked for the Committee to be re-convened in order to consider the changes in the table and suggested that Bill present the report for approval at the June IRC meeting. There being no objections to that suggestion, the Chair asked Bill to follow through on that suggestion.

There was some discussion about the possibility of making the management group an IRC program group. Bill stated that no matter what status the management group is given, it should report to the IRC regularly. Bill expressed concern about evaluating the project in less than a year because many of the tasks the committee will be doing are quite extensive in scope. A motion was passed to name the group the "Distributed Computing Support Management Team."

Communications Program Group

Bill Buntain distributed the Communications Program Group's Technology Effectiveness Report. He reported that there has not been as big a response to purchasing the Premium Dial up service as had been anticipated; therefore, it is not paying for itself, and a new plan must be considered.

Bill explained that he thinks the reason the Premium Service has not been purchased is because PPP is available on both services so naturally people will opt for getting the free service and PPP creates a need for a lot more help from support staff without financial support to cover the increased man hours. Bill brought a recommendation from the Program Group that the free service be dropped and then use the operating expense savings to subsidize the premium service, thus reducing the price of the premium service. Bill suggested that action be taken this summer, as a test, to determine the financial impact for planning in the Fall. He explained that at the present time the rate for premium service is \$10.00/month local and \$15.00/month for Dallas & Ft. Worth. If the recommendation is agreed upon, it could reduce those charges to \$12.00/month for Dallas & Ft. Worth. He explained that the biggest expense is in the hidden cost of support staff.

There was discussion about another recommendation by the Program Group which would drop PPP support from the free service and reduce the number of lines to the historic level of 48 local lines and 16 Metro lines. Bill said this recommendation would free up about \$20,000 which could be put into the premium service to offset its costs.

A vote was taken on the first recommendation, which was to drop the free service and use the operating expense savings to subsidize the premium service, thus reducing the price of the premium service. This recommendation was not accepted.

Don Grose then moved to accept the second recommendation, which was to drop PPP support from the free service and reduce the number of lines to the historic level of 48 local lines and 16 Metro lines. John Todd seconded the motion. Joneel Harris suggested that PPP be kept on the free service but just reduce the number of lines as suggested in the motion. The suggestion was accepted as a friendly amendment to the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. It was agreed that this would be monitored throughout the summer to determine its impact.

Jenny Jopling reported that the Instruction Program Group, after doing further work on its proposal, decided not to present it to the IRC at this time. She and Bill McCarter met with the Provost to discuss the proposal and were told the committee could take a vacation for the rest of the summer. The Provost appointed David Kesterson to head a work group to assess the current situation in

classrooms.

Research Program Group

Dennis Mueller reported that the Research Program Group met to discuss the Technology Effectiveness Report and the NCHEMS report. The committee recommended that if the name of the Computing Center is changed that it be changed to "Computing and Information Technology."

Clarification

Dennis Mueller suggested a clarification of the September 19, 1995 IRC meeting regarding the allocation of funds for faculty desktop workstation computers to achieve a minimum standard platform across campus for communication purposes. The original recommendation was to allocate \$500,000 for the current year with the express intent of allocating an additional \$500,000 for each of the next two years as well. The clarification was so noted.

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New Dean to Chair IRC

Dr. Phil Turner is the new Dean of the School of Library and Information Science. As an integral part of this appointment, he will also have the title and duties of Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs for Distance Education. He will serve as chair of the Information Resources Council and as a member of the Provost's staff as well as the Council of Deans, and will assume other duties related to instructional technology and distance education as these are determined, according to Dr. Blaine Brownell, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

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Staff Activities

Awards

- **Don Butler**, Student Records Team Leader, was recognized for 20 years of service recently.

A Tragic Loss

James Yarbrough, long-time staff member in Academic Computing Services, passed away on July 2, 1996 due to complications from cancer. James' death came as a great blow to all those who knew and worked with him. James had been battling cancer for about a year and was thought to be winning until shortly before his death.

James had B.S. and M.B.A. degrees from UNT. He had completed all of his course work and was working on his dissertation for a Ph.D. in Sociology at TWU at the time of his death. James was also a talented musician and composer and was an excellent golfer.

James' family has requested that those who wish to remember James, please make a donation in his name to Ann's Haven Hospice here in Denton.

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Premium Service Gets You Connected

If you had a Premium account you could have high-speed analog modem access to UNT and Internet computing resources. Subscribers are guaranteed the user/line ratio **will not exceed** 7 to 1.

Some important dates to remember: Summer access must be renewed by August 24, new Premium accounts become available on August 19.

For more information about this service consult the Web page <http://www-lan.unt.edu/HELPDESK/ppp/premium.htm> or contact Support Services at 565-2324 (ISB 119).

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